WE CLAIM

1   1.   A method for maintaining a common session identifier in a network, comprising:
2   providing a session identifier to an off-load server.

1   2.   The method recited in Claim 1, wherein:
2   providing the session identifier further comprises providing the session identifier as a
3   non-required parameter in accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   3.   The method recited in Claim 1, wherein:
2   providing the session identifier further comprises providing the session identifier in a
3   session setup request.

1   4.   The method recited in Claim 1, further comprising:
2   determining whether the session identifier is provided as a non-required parameter in
3   accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   5.   The method recited in Claim 4, further comprising:
2   assigning, if the session identifier is not provided, a session identifier.

1   6.   The method recited in Claim 1, further comprising:
2   associating a start record with the session identifier.

1   7.   The method recited in Claim 6, further comprising:
2   providing the start record to a software module that provides for performing accounting
3   processing.

1   8.   The method recited in Claim 1, further comprising:
2   associating a stop record with the session identifier.

1   9.   The method recited in Claim 8, further comprising:
2   providing the stop record to a software module that provides for performing accounting
3   processing.

1   10.   A method for maintaining a common session identifier in a network, comprising:
2   determining whether the session identifier value is provided by an access server; and
3   assigning, if the session identifier value is not provided by the access server, the session
4   identifier value.

1   11.   The method recited in Claim 10, further comprising:

2   inspecting a parameter list for the session identifier value.

1   12.   The method recited in Claim 10, wherein:

2   determining whether the session identifier value is provided by the access server further

3   comprises determining whether the session identifier value is contained within a

4   non-required parameter string provided by the access server.

1   13.   The method recited in Claim 10, further comprising:

2   associating a start record with the session identifier.

1   14.   The method recited in Claim 13, further comprising:

2   providing the start record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

3   processing.

1   15.   The method recited in Claim 10, further comprising:

2   associating a stop record with the session identifier.

1   16.   The method recited in Claim 15, further comprising:

2   providing the stop record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

3   processing.

1   17.   The method recited in Claim 10, further comprising:

2   providing the session identifier from the access server to an off-load server.

1   18.   The method recited in Claim 17, wherein:

2   providing the session identifier further comprises providing the session identifier as a

3   non-required parameter in accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   19.   A system, comprising:

2   a network access server, wherein the network access server is configured to generate a

3   session identifier, the network access server being further configured to provide

4   the session identifier to an off-load server.

1   20.   The system recited in Claim 19, further comprising:

2   an off-load server, the off-load server being coupled to receive the session identifier from

3   the network access server.

1   21.   The system recited in Claim 19, further comprising:

2   a software module that is configured to perform authentication, the software module

3   being further configured to receive the session identifier from the network access

4   server.

1   22.   The system recited in Claim 19, wherein:

2   the network access server is further configured to provide the session in a non-required

3   parameter list according to a tunnel protocol.

1   23.   A system, comprising:

2   an off-load server, wherein the off-load server is configured to receive a session

3   identifier from a network access server.

1   24.   The system recited in Claim 23, further comprising:

2   a software module that is configured to perform authentication, the software module

3   being further configured to receive the session identifier from the network access

4   server.

1   25.   The system recited in Claim 23, wherein:

2   the off-load server is further configured to receive the session identifier from a network

3   access server in a non-required parameter list according to a tunnel protocol.

1   26.   The system recited in Claim 23, wherein:

2   the off-load server is further configured to generate a start record, the off-load server

3   being further configured to associate the start record with the session identifier;

4   and

5   the off-load server is further configured to provide the start record to a software module

6   that provides for performing accounting processing.

1   27.   The system recited in Claim 23, wherein:

2   the off-load server is further configured to generate a stop record, the off-load server

3   being further configured to associate the stop record with the session identifier;

4   and

5   the off-load server is further configured to provide the stop record to a software module

6   that provides for performing accounting processing.

1   28.   An apparatus, comprising:

2   means for providing a session identifier from an access server to an off-load server.

1   29.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, wherein:
2   means for providing a session identifier further comprises means for providing the
3   session identifier as a non-required parameter in accordance with a tunnel
4   protocol.

1   30.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, wherein:
2   means for providing a session identifier further comprises means for providing the
3   session identifier in a session setup request.

1   31.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, further comprising:
2   means for determining whether the session identifier is provided as a non-required
3   parameter in accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   32.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, further comprising:
2   means for assigning, if the session identifier is not provided, a session identifier.

1   33.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, further comprising:
2   means for associating a start record with the session identifier.

1   34.   The apparatus recited in Claim 33, further comprising:
2   means for providing the start record to a software module that provides for performing
3   accounting processing.

1   35.   The apparatus recited in Claim 28, further comprising:
2   means for associating a stop record with the session identifier. _

1   36.   The apparatus recited in Claim 35, further comprising:
2   means for providing the stop record to a software module that provides for performing
3   accounting processing.

1   37.   An apparatus, comprising:
2   means for determining whether a session identifier value is provided by an access server;
3   and

4   means for assigning, if the session identifier value is not provided by the access server,
5   the session identifier value.

1   38.   The apparatus recited in Claim 37, further comprising:
2   means for inspecting a parameter list for the session identifier value.

1   39.   The apparatus recited in Claim 37, wherein:

2   means for determining whether the session identifier value is provided by the access

3   server further comprises means for determining whether the session identifier

4   value is contained within a non-required parameter list provided by the access

5   server.

1   40.   The apparatus recited in Claim 37, further comprising:

2   means for associating a start record with the session identifier.

1   41.   The apparatus recited in Claim 40, further comprising:

2   means for providing the start record to a software module that provides for performing

3   accounting processing.

1   42.   The apparatus recited in Claim 37, further comprising:

2   means for associating a stop record with the session identifier.

1   43.   The apparatus recited in Claim 42, further comprising:

2   means for providing the stop record to a software module that provides for performing

3   accounting processing.

1   44.   The apparatus recited in Claim 37, further comprising:

2   means for providing the session identifier from the access server to an off-load server.

1   45.   The apparatus recited in Claim 44, further comprising:

2   means for providing the session identifier further comprising providing the session

3   identifier as a non-required parameter in accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   46.   A computer program product, encoded in computer readable media, comprising:

2   a first set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to provide a

3   session identifier to an off-load server.

1   47.   The computer program product of claim 46, encoded in computer readable media,

2   wherein:

3   the first set of instructions, executable on the computer system, is further configured to

4   provide the session identifier as a non-required parameter in accordance with a

5   tunnel protocol.

1   48. The computer program product of claim 46, encoded in computer readable media,

2 wherein:

3   the first set of instructions, executable on the computer system, is further configured to

4   provide the session identifier in a session setup request.

1   49. The computer program product of claim 46, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a second set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to determine

4   whether the session identifier is provided as a non-required parameter in

5   accordance with a tunnel protocol.

1   50. The computer program product of claim 49, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a third set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to assign, if the

4   session identifier is not provided, a session identifier.

1   51. The computer program product of claim 46, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a second set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to associate a

4   start record with the session identifier.

1   52. The computer program product of claim 51, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a third set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to provide the

4   start record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

5   processing.

1   53. The computer program product of claim 46, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a second set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to associate a

4   stop record with the session identifier.

1   54. The computer program product of claim 53, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a third set of instructions, executable on the computer system, configured to provide the

4   stop record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

5   processing.

1 55. A computer program product, encoded in computer readable media, comprising:

2 a first set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to determine

3 whether the session identifier value is provided by an access server; and

4 a second set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to assign, if the

5 session identifier value is not provided by the access server, the session identifier

6 value.

1 56. The computer program product of claim 55, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3 a third set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to inspect a

4 parameter list for the session identifier value.

1 57. The computer program product of claim 55, encoded in computer readable media,

2 wherein:

3 the first set of instructions, executable on a computer system, is further configured to

4 determine whether the session identifier value is contained within a non-required

5 parameter string provided by the access server.

1 58. The computer program product of claim 55, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3 a third set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to associate a

4 start record with the session identifier.

1 59. The computer program product of claim 58, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3 a fourth set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to provide the

4 start record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

5 processing.

1 60. The computer program product of claim 55, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3 a third set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to associate a

4 stop record with the session identifier.

1 61. The computer program product of claim 60, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

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3   a fourth set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to provide the

4   stop record to a software module that provides for performing accounting

5   processing.

1   62.   The computer program product of claim 55, encoded in computer readable media,

2 further comprising:

3   a third set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to provide the

4   session identifier from the access server to an off-load server.

1   63.   The computer program product of claim 62, encoded in computer readable media,

2 wherein:

3   the third set of instructions, executable on a computer system, is further configured to

4   provide the session identifier as a non-required parameter in accordance with a

5   tunnel protocol.